

**MN STC Watershed Sub-Committee  
Organizing Session**

March 29, 2011

Met as part of Sand County Foundation MRBI meeting in La Crosse, WI

**Present:**

Wayne Anderson (MPCA)

Donna Rasmussen (Fillmore County SWCD)

Lynn Nelson (Sauk River Watershed)

George Boody (LSP and Chippewa 10% Project)

**Summary of discussion**

**Modifications of charge:**

We reviewed the draft charge proposed by George to Don:

Proposed additions to draft charge included:

Wayne suggested adding “readiness for new opportunities.” The STC was not ready when the opportunity to add the Chippewa came up. This would include engaging the scientific committee used previously to review and rank watersheds.

Donna proposed adding: “Reviewing needed modifications to NRCS-MN protocols.”

The draft charge would now read as:

The NRCS Mississippi River Basin Initiative (MRBI) provides a rare opportunity to test the delivery of targeted conservation dollars to achieve specific water-related goals. It is critical to NRCS, state water quality agencies, farmers and a variety of public and private partners to use this opportunity to show how this approach can be done successfully in MRBI watersheds and others not so designated but that are making comprehensive investments in ways that mirror MRBI intent. This committee is appointed by the MN State Conservationist to:

- Be ready when new opportunities to add watersheds arise, which includes involving the scientific review panel;
- Review and propose needed modifications to NRS-MN protocols to support MRBI or other watershed projects;
- Review progress in MRBI and other watersheds using a comprehensive approach to identify potential gaps related to MRBI intent and, if helpful, recommend assistance to address potential gaps;
- Create a process to share what is being learned by MRBI and other watersheds using a comprehensive approach;
- Engage the STC and the national MRBI leaders in a dialogue about what is being learned in Minnesota.

**Future agenda items:**

Lynn proposed we discuss:

- BWSR methods as well as other methods for measuring outcomes from projects; and
- Methods to gather baseline data that are suitable across a range of conditions and funding levels.

**Unique aspects in MN for MRBI and related watershed work:**

- In MN the work of this watershed sub-committee is closely related to impaired waters and total maximum daily load studies and load calculations.
- The MN Feedlot rules, Shoreland rules appear to be useful regulatory backstops.
- The Legacy amendment funding for Clean Water provides significant state financial resources to leverage NRCS programs.

**How should this sub-committee be structured and who should be involved?**

Co-chair: George Boody

We agreed on two tiers:

A. Core group: Those involved in advancing watershed projects that are liaisons to the STC, e.g., Root, Sauk, Middle MN, Upper Cedar (are they on the STC??), Chippewa River and other watersheds directly connected to the STC (WHICH ONES?). These include watersheds in and not in the MRBI. This group should also include people from MPCA, DNR, BWSR, MDA, Minnesota Agriculture Water Resources Coalition and interested NGOs that participate on the STC.

B. An expanded group: Watershed projects that, like MRBI watersheds, are engaged in baseline monitoring, identifying focal areas to solve water quality issues, farmer involvement and recruitment to adopt systems and practices that solve the water quality runoff issues from agriculture, and use of modeling and monitoring to identify outcomes. These include watersheds already selected for MRBI, those not currently in the MRBI, as well as those not directly engaged with the MN STC. Examples would include, but not be limited to, the Cannon River Watershed Project, Crow River Organization of Water, Le Sueur River Watershed, St. Croix River Association, Whitewater River Watershed Project, Zumbro Watershed Partnership and/or others not included in the Core group.

**When?**

- Shoot for an initial meeting in June of the Core group
- Followed by teleconference calls
- Include expanded group in follow-up calls or meetings to be determined and using innovative approaches for sharing and mutual learning.